

Secondary Teacher Education in Ethiopia: A New Perspective

Teklehaimanot Haileselassie

Introduction

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- the reduction as much as possible or total elimination of the pedagogical courses;
- after graduation, the labels should not be B.Ed. degree but B.A or B.Sc. degree

Amazingly enough these ideas were also tacitly supported by some of the academia in the same colleges of teacher education. For example, some department members of a full-fledged faculty of education argued about issue of the degree nomenclature in a formal academic commission meeting and suggested that "the marketability of the degree should also be considered" and that "therefore it has to be a BA/ BSc". In fact "if it is labeled as BEd, it may narrow the graduates opportunity for employment outside teaching". In this

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connection one cannot be caught by surprise to learn that two of the officially established secondary teacher education colleges had changed their official names to avoid the part that indicated "teacher education", without going through the formal process of changing the names of institutions.

A great deal of time was spent by the pertinent bodies in the Ministry of Education to debate the above wrong notions and explain why pedagogical courses constituted for 20% of the total credits (i.e. about 28-32 credits) and the education faculties should offer BEd. Degrees in the different fields of study for teaching. Were the explanations satisfactorily to the students? What are the general conditions of secondary teacher education in Ethiopia? And how are they affecting the quality of teachers at the second level of education? Hence this paper was initiated as a result of the immediate response to of the crisis. It overviews the global conditions of teacher education, surveys the background of the problem and assesses the current situation against the principles of secondary teacher education and finally recommends for further directions of activities and practices.

The scope of this paper does not encompass the operational questions like recruitment of trainees, remuneration after graduation, teachers' job conditions and satisfactions in the schools and their status in the society which certainly have influence on the training and will be treated in another paper. This paper focuses on the technical and curricular issues affecting the missions of the faculties and their training programmes.

Synopsis of the Situation of Teacher Education in Ethiopia: Some Reflections of the Past and its Legacies

It was in the early forties that secondary education was structured in relatively explicit terms. Secondary teacher education however was systematically initiated as late as the beginning of the sixties (the Faculty of Education of the Addis

Ababa University started in 1962). In 1970 the diploma programme now at Kotobe, started in the premises of the Technical School at Mexico Square

One important phenomenon that faced the secondary teacher education was lack of qualified trainees. In other words most school leavers were not readily willing to join training for the profession as their first choice. This problem was as old as the initiation of the programme of secondary teacher education in the country; in 1954 none of the 68 students who qualified to follow higher education chose to join the programme. Besides, the Faculty of Education did not have its own staff due to structural reasons. All these had a cumulative effect in its efficiency and by 1972, in a period of twenty years, a total of only 492 graduate secondary school teachers were produced from the then the sole local source of trained teachers at that level. (MOE 1983E.C) That was why in the early seventies over 50% of the senior secondary staff were expatriates.

A successful but short lived programme named as Bede Mariam Laboratory School was founded to recruit from grade 11 complete high caliber students to enroll them in the Faculty of Education after one year (grade 12) preparatory scholarship.

The worst period in the history of secondary teacher education was during the Military Administration when all students who were enrolled to study Maths, English, Amharic, Geography, History Physics, Biology and Chemistry, irrespective of whether they would be teachers after their graduation, were required to take 18 credits of professional courses in education. Since all graduates were assigned to different government institutions by a central authorities, body of the government, any graduate did not know graduate whether he/she would be a teacher or not until. For instance, a chemistry student had to complete the four- year study and graduate before he knew his assignment either in a factory or in a secondary school. And there was no room to reject the

assignment; it could mean ending up in jail if one failed to report to his/her place of assignment. Such a graduate was neither psychologically nor professionally prepared to be a teacher. This method of training which prevailed for fifteen years coupled with the overall dissatisfaction with the teaching profession was a serious problem of staffing the secondary schools.

One basic misconception that prevailed then was that anyone who had taken a course, such as chemistry, and earned a B.Sc. could teach the course. Teaching at secondary school was considered to be just a job rather than a profession that required specialized training and practice. Another grave mistake observed in the Ethiopian secondary teacher education was the tendency to consider subject matters such as Biology, English, etc. as "non-education" and the practicum and pedagogics as education. This dichotomy created a cleavage between the two groups of the staff and accordingly everything was fragmented - the mission, the objectives and the means were all disoriented which in turn affected the whole purpose and vitality of the activity and thereby the quality of the products - the graduate teachers.

Fragmentation of programmes is still one clear and serious shortcoming of the secondary teacher education. Students are enrolled under four different faculties within one university. As a consequence most prevailing problems are related to fragmentation and thereby disorientation of mission and undefined profiles and related problems in the preparation of secondary teacher education:

This misconception of the dualist approach was not unique to Ethiopia; it was shared by other systems of teacher education in some other countries. What makes it different from so many other countries is that their concern was that of quality while in the case of Ethiopia neither the quantitative nor the qualitative requirements were met. Moreover the systems elsewhere

more or less have changed while our system needs a considerable change yet.

To effectively tackle these problems the Ministry of Education on the basis of the Education and Training Policy established three new Faculties of Education outside Addis Ababa. This favourable measure of the Government will increase the annual supply of new graduate secondary school teachers by five fold. The first graduates of this programme will come out in June 2000 and the quality of staff, 60% of which is currently under qualified.

However, the mission, the curriculum, the structure and the methodology applied in the Ethiopian School system need to be evaluated reviewed and rated against the international practices, experiences and modern insights discussed below.

Some Current Issues and Theoretical Considerations of Secondary Teacher Education

There are numerous traditions and systems of training of teachers. They vary not only from country to country but even within the same country. Variability is one widespread characteristic of teacher education (Zuzausky 1996)

Nevertheless practically every country is now raising two basic questions: what is a good teacher and how can such a teacher be created?

Ironically enough although teaching is one of the oldest professions, teacher education is still unfinished in many respects.

A serious crisis existed in teacher education. Complete specifications based on clear views on teaching and how it should be supported by research and professional education were not readily available. In England, and Wales where 66%

of the teacher education is supposed to be school-based, there is still a tug-of-war between the government and the old higher education institutions (Schnur and Golby, 1995). This is because the government introduced more school-based and shorter duration teacher education programmes and the universities were highly skeptical about it. On the contrary in the United States the guiding principle was that if one masters the knowledge of a subject matter he or she is considered to be a successful teacher. (Schnur and Golby, 1995). Accordingly, in the eighties the non-subject matter credits in teacher education programmes were reduced to 10%-25%, varying from state to state.

Why were the professional courses reduced? Why would such measures be rated inappropriate in the cases of other professions like medicine and law? And what are the sources of all these ambiguities and misconceptions? Problems that faced secondary teacher education originate from various causal sources and the major ones are discussed below.

Fragmentation and loss of identity - Teacher education is offered in schools, colleges and different departments in Universities. This phenomenon of fragmentation is unique to teacher education and it has a serious consequence "a severe loss of identity of teacher education" (Schen 1995). This is because the faculties of teacher education do not enjoy the virtual autonomy of other professional institutions like those of schools of medicine or faculties of law.

In many European countries responsibilities of teacher education and its various components were scattered in different departments which implied that clear definitions of duty and accountability did not exist. This fact may explain some of the drawbacks of teacher education. It is necessary to restructure the faculties of education and make them responsible for all components of teacher education (Buchberger and Byrne 1995). Hence although we can not advocate for one single model of preparation of teachers,

institutional integration is a very important aspect of teacher education (Keally, 1995).

According to Schnur and Golby, the sub-sector was "often in a comus of disdain of being not quite a profession, of having no real intellectual substance, and of possessing marginal academic value".

This fragmented nature and loss of identity resulted in so many other crucial problems - such as low involvement in research, lack of professional belongingness, problem of clarity in mission, absence of identified values and norms in the curriculum and last but not least, paucity of theoretical foundation of teacher education.

Lack of research A negative correlation of significance was observed between the staff involvement in research and training of school teachers in Britain (Schen 1995). This means that those who were active in teacher training were less involved in research. This further resulted in differential advantages of reward like securing tenure those not involved in teacher preparation. And in the words of Schen "the result of this inequitable reward structure is the marginalization of the heavily involved group and its primary job - teacher education" (Schen 1995). The issue here is not to propagare for less involvement in research. In fact lack of adequate research among teacher educators is a crucial problem. However, there seems to be a need of counterbalancing to accommodate meritorious teaching and service in the reward structure of teacher education.

Researchers in education generally disregarded teacher education and focused only on the so-called pedagogical triangle (i.e. pupils, teachers and teaching materials).

A profession in question? The degree of misconception on teacher education by some writers has soared upto doubting whether it is to be considered a profession or just a vocation.

However as Schnur and Golby have rightly pointed out, "future teachers are not to become robotic clones of present teachers, and if future schools are not to be mere replicas of present schools, teacher education must develop its own independence of thought and inquiry". They further reiterated that "teaching must be immediately responsive to the needs of the society in which it resides. It must also hypothesize, inquire, experiment, seek truths yet to be discovered and - yes - make professional mistakes" (Schnur and Golby 1995). Generally this doubt of the legitimacy of the profession *inter alia* had cast a shadow on the structuring of the faculties and setting up of programmes and courses.

Mission endangered - As we have discussed above a rather serious skepticism prevails about whether teacher education and for that matter, teaching as a whole, is a profession. The mission of teacher education was thus put in jeopardy. If the mission is doubtful one can not expect clear goals and objectives from teacher education institutions. This entails, a problem of not having clear profiles of the teacher educators as well as their trainees and would- be -teachers, and force the management of teacher education not to operate by objectives. In general, of course, "teacher education has to support the professional development in all phases of their professional career" (Buchberger and Byrne, 1995).

According to Buchberger and Byrne, clarifying the necessary capabilities, attitudes, values and norms beforehand, enable, the trainees to attain lasting professional and personal advancement after the pre-service teacher education.

The Need for Identification of values - To design the correct profiles of teacher educators as well as the trainees for teaching, the first question that usually arises is in a multi-cultural society which values should be promoted? And this notion tended to weaken the very idea of applying value in the curriculum of teacher education. Nevertheless, according to Butroyd (1997), "in order to understand how and why teachers

value some things above others, we need a great exploration of beliefs, as these play such a central role in what is valued". Butroyd further argued that "teachers' beliefs play a central role in defining, organizing and supporting a teacher's task. This is because teachers work with ill-defined and deeply entangled problems and contexts which, when dealing with such complexity, makes the application of knowledge-based systems difficult". (Butroyd 997:254). Because individuals' interpretations of the values are different from each other, the effect of the hidden curriculum is intertwined with the values of the teachers. Hence without understanding their motives and attitudes one cannot fairly investigate the impact of the teacher.

However, since teachers' values are shared values they are personal as well as societal. But this should not be a pretext for not trying to systematically regulate the value system in teacher education.

One becoming example in this respect is the case of the Danish teachers. Their attitudes revealed a high level of "professional awareness and practical commitment to social values", i.e. "democratic values and norms" (Jensen 1995). Sultana (1995) also recommended that a strong board of studies should be established to safeguard the values of the teacher education institution and to ensure that those values are truly observed and applied by all faculty staff, throughout their overt and covert curricula.

The Kernel of the matter, as Sultana stated, is that "it is crucial that we put democratic values at the heart of our endeavors as educators".

The Current theoretical basis of teacher education - The theoretical foundation of learning or teacher education in particular and education in general has obviously important bearings on the structure, curriculum, and implementation of secondary teacher education.

The dualist view and approach coupled with behaviourism was the most widespread wrong view among teacher educators.

a dualist view of persons continues to be strongly associated with the term skill. Its major elements seem to be that thought and behaviour are considered different and separate, with thinking seen essentially conscious and self-aware, taking place in the mind and doing as just doing, as opposed to thinking. (Tomlinson 1995:189).

This traditional dualism of the 'mind and body' entails the behaviorist view that skills are attained as habits by repetitive practices. The practicum in teacher education was mainly based on such a wrong view. The behaviorist view of skill development in teacher education seems to have lingered more than other aspects of pedagogy. Besides the given and non-rationalized traditional approach, like in our case, this was one wrong theoretical basis why some programmes used to be fragmented into where they get the "knowledge" (subject matter) and the "skill" (the practicum).

This leads us to the latest option and currently accepted theory in epistemology which has brought about the leading principles of learning and instruction and thus should serve as a basis for teacher education programmes. This is generally termed as the constructivist view and approach of learning.

Knowledge is no longer viewed as a representation of an external objective reality which is independent of the learner, but rather as actively constructed by individuals and dependent on their previously existing perceptions, cognitive structures, and prior belief systems and values (Zuzovsky 1996).

Constructivism has three tiers or versions - viz: (i) the cognitive version of Piaget; the social constructivism or the dialogue

version, and "learning in the active participation of the learner in activities of a community of practice", learning is "more in the collective action performed in the real world". (Zuzovsky 1996:278).

Bengtsson (1995) has attempted to elaborate the constructivist view applying a concept termed "distance". He argues that "as a human agent, man does not have distance to him - or herself". In reality "his activity is not an object, but the active subject. Hence "practice is lived through and not an object of study in the natural attitude". He further reiterates that "skill is a way of acting and seeing which has settled in our live body as knowledge." And thus "body and mind do not belong to different spheres here, but are perfectly integrated and interdependent".

By way of distancing, Bengtsson, *mutatis mutandis*, represents the above version of structuralist views of epistemology of practice as self-reflection; dialogue, and scientific research - to accrue in "self knowledge", "collegial knowledge" and scientific research based knowledge, respectively. He convincingly has argued that none of them should be subjected to dualism with practice.

Zuzovsky elaborates that constructivist epistemology has numerous and essential implications for teacher education. It considers experience as generative source of knowledge; and it also regards that the reflective dialogue between learners and the context or the environment, and between "learners" and "themselves" or other knowledgeable persons as the vital means of learning (Zuzovsky, 1996).

The teacher preparation know how, therefore, requires to involve not only the planning of actions but also the representations of the contextual situations and their interactive effects. This is one fundamental reason why a holistic professional environment or a full-fledged faculty with

integrated components is now the most widespread desirable and accepted arrangement.

Concluding Remarks

Now than ever there is a clearer understanding and acceptance of the dialectical nature of the fundamental categories of knowledge and practice in the theory of learning and the philosophy of teacher education. Many countries have reformed their systems of teacher education according to the constructivist epistemology.

On the other hand, practically all the problems of teacher education discussed above are conspicuous in the Ethiopian Secondary Teacher Education programmes. These major flaws in conjunction with the other supply and administration related problems have put the sub-sector in crucial situation. The government has taken worthwhile steps to expand the sub sector and increase the supply of secondary teachers. The following measures also need to be taken in the respective institutions so that the modern views of teacher preparation will be applied in all activities from planning to didactics.

- Teacher educators need to make a serious effort to give the education of teachers a scientific basis. Experiential traditions have to be replaced by upto date epistemological principles. Accordingly the persisting dualist and behaviorist outlooks and practices need to be replaced by and based on the modern constructivism.
- Training components in the institutions need to be integrated. Fragmentation has to be avoided.
- Teacher education faculties and secondary schools partnership has to be fostered.
- Definition and clarification of faculty missions and roles is essential. They have, for instance, to assume full

responsibility of evaluating their products regularly and make the necessary and timely amendments in their programmes, etc.

- Establishment of professional formal of teacher educators could help to raise standards of didactics, promote teaching as a career, increase the involvement of schools in teacher education and up grade quality and efficiency of training.
- The institutions have to ensure that the democratic values of the society are at the heart of their endeavors.
- To attain all the above-recommended activities, strengthening and supporting research activities of the teacher educators is a strategic means.

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